

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** February 7, 2011  
**TO:** Policy Committee  
**FROM:** Luke Vinciguerra, Planner  
**SUBJECT:** Development Standards - Parking Ordinance

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### I. Parking

Parking standards can generally be found in sections 24-52 through 61 of the Zoning Ordinance, establishing among other items, minimum off-street parking requirements and design standards. Minimum parking standards are an essential component of a zoning ordinance as it helps ensure adequate parking during periods of high demand. This is not only important from a business perspective, as it helps ensure that customers can find a parking space and are not drawn to another store, it also prevents unauthorized parking on streets and stacking on adjacent roads. Another critical element of the parking ordinance is parking lot design, specifically stall and aisle size. This is regulated to ensure that vehicles can safely pass and avoid collisions within parking lots. Two other main provisions within parking lot design, lighting and landscaping, have been covered in separate staff reports.

Within the category of Development Standards staff has been reviewing the parking ordinance to ensure consistency with State regulations and the American Planning Association Best Management Practices, while including revisions recommended in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan. Given this scope, staff has investigated ways to help reduce the likelihood of excessive parking, alleviate congestion on adjacent roadways, increase consistency with the landscape ordinance, and reduce parking lot visibility in Community Character Areas.

### II. Discussion Items

#### A. Excessive parking

##### 1. Description of Issue

- *The method the County uses to calculate minimum parking standards is still considered “the Golden Rule” for suburban development; however, staff is aware that in some instances the County’s minimum ordinance standards require well more than what actually is necessary for the successful operation of a business.*
- *The Zoning Ordinance generally categorizes retail uses as “High Demand” which staff has found to be excessive in some circumstances. For example, parking for drug stores and fast food restaurants with drive-throughs would require 1 parking spot for every 200 square feet. This is considered excessive since drive-through reduce the number of customers in the store.*
- *A recent example of where minimum ordinance standards were higher than needed was the Tractor Supply case on Richmond Road. An establishment that sells specialized farming goods may not need the same parking requirements as a convenience store. In this circumstance, the ordinance would have required 138 parking spaces while the applicant thought 70 was sufficient.*
- *Many County documents suggest reducing impervious cover to the extent possible. One*

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large source of impervious cover is parking lots. A way to reduce impervious cover is by providing pervious pavers on acceptable soils.

2. History

The parking ordinance was created in 1985 and has had more than a dozen updates to date. In 1999 the Board approved significant revisions to the parking ordinance that permitted off street parking, added minimum geometric standards for angular parking, provided an opportunity for shared parking, recognized mass transit, required bicycle facilities for larger development and made some changes to categorical groups.

3. Comprehensive Plan GSAs, public input, Sustainability Audit, and PC and BOS Direction

- Sustainability Audit Recommendation #102 - Some of the retail uses listed as high demand parking, requiring one space per 200 square feet could be considered moderate demand parking where one space per 250 square feet would be sufficient. Certain retail uses such as grocery stores/supermarkets require at least one space per 200 square feet, but many other general retail uses don't require this amount of parking.
- Sustainability Audit Recommendation #103 - There should also be maximum parking limit, with allowances for parking in excess of requirements where demonstrated to be necessary. That maximum parking limit could be set at 120% of minimum parking requirements.

4. Solutions and Policy Options

- Some localities approach this issue by listing nearly every conceivable use and assigning a parking requirement. Staff does not recommend further categorizing uses, as no list would be exhaustive. Rather, staff proposes an administrative waiver process by which applicants can propose an alternative number of spaces less than the ordinance if they can demonstrate to the Planning Director why the ordinance requirements are not applicable and why an alternative number of spaces would be realistic based on data from existing similar establishments. This administrative waiver process would be simpler and quicker for an applicant than the current requirement of going to the DRC.
- Consistent with best management practices, staff also recommends establishing a maximum parking provision, stating that no more than 120% of the minimum parking is acceptable without approval from the Development Review Committee (DRC). The DRC would evaluate the necessity of the extra parking and would need to be convinced of its necessity after reviewing why the applicant cannot:
  - Utilize a shared parking agreement (with a neighboring development) and/or
  - Implement a parking management plan (varying hours, incentives for employees to use transit).

This maximum requirement would be waived if a parking garage is used. The DRC, at its discretion, could approve additional parking and could require pervious pavers for the excess parking should conditions allow it.

- Staff will also review all High Demand, Category A uses (1 parking space per every 200 sq ft) to see if they could be moved to Moderate Demand, Category B (1 space per every 250 sq ft).

**B. Parking lot connectivity**

1. Description of Issue

- Currently, adjacent contiguous parking lots on separate parcels are not required to connect to each other. Should a motorist wish to drive from one store to another on a neighboring parcel, the driver would likely have to re-enter the primary road to make the maneuver. This can be an issue for smaller strip retail establishments in close proximity.

- *Access management and connectivity become more of an issue as a locality develops. The more congested a roadway becomes the more planners look for opportunities to increase connectivity between developments. An example of an opportunity to connect internally is between Jimmy's Pizza and 7-11 on Richmond Road.*
- 2. History
  - *The current ordinance only requires demonstration of functional efficiency within a parking lot, but does not discuss connections.*
- 3. Comprehensive Plan GSAs, public input, Sustainability Audit, and PC and BOS Direction
  - *T.1.2 - Expect new developments to maintain and acceptable level of service on the surrounding roads and intersections consistent with the land use context (rural, suburban, urban) and the function classification of the roadway. Ensure that new developments do not compromise planned transportation enhancements by:*
    - o *T.1.2.1 - Limiting driveways and other access points and providing shared entrances, side street access and frontage roads.*
    - o *T.1.2.2 – Providing a high degree of inter-connectivity within new developments, adjoining new developments and existing developments using streets, trails, sidewalks, bikeways and multi-use trails.*
    - o *T.1.2.3 - Concentrating commercial development in compact nodes or in Mixed Use areas with internal road systems and interconnected parcel access rather than extending development with multiple access points along existing primary and secondary roads.*
  - *Sustainability Audit recommendation #98: In coordination with the VDOT driveway standards, the zoning ordinance should encourage shared driveways and service drive connections between adjacent land uses.*
  - *There was no specific PC or BOS direction provided regarding this topic.*
- 4. Solutions and Policy Options
  - *Consistent with best management practices, staff proposes that new commercial development where adjacent parcel(s) is/are designated Community Commercial or Neighborhood Commercial on the Comprehensive Plan attempt during a rezoning, special use permit, or site plan to connect parking lots internally using a stub-out. This strategy helps to increase connectivity, reduce dependence on primary roads, and facilitates businesses sharing customers. One problem with requiring internal connections is that it can create disputes between neighbors should there be a blocking of spaces or cut-through traffic. Staff believes that requiring discussions among adjoining property owners would be a positive step and could avoid these problems. During review of a conceptual plan, site plan, or legislative application, staff would ask for verification that an attempt was made to connect to a neighboring parcel (should a stub-out not be proposed). Should stub-outs not be shown on a plan, a written response stating an internal connection was considered and the logic behind its exclusion would be sufficient. Staff is examining ways to incentivize additional follow-through on this concept.*

## **C. Consistency with the Landscape Ordinance**

1. Description of Issue
  - *There is a perceived conflict between ordinance section 24-57(a) for parking lot design and section 24-97(b)(4) for parking lot landscape design. Landscape islands are required a minimum of every 150' by the parking lot design standards, while trees are required a minimum of every 75' by parking lot landscape standards. Applicants frequently question what areas are considered within the perimeter of the parking lot*

*and feel that a 75' spacing of trees is too close. They feel that the requirement is too stringent and that a potential solution of staggering the trees is often difficult from a design standpoint. Historically, staff has been able to compromise with landscape islands and tree every 90-99'.*

2. History

- *An ordinance revision in the 1990s required trees to be evenly distributed throughout the interior of the parking lot. Trees were required to be spaced no further than 75' apart. This provision has been criticized as being inconsistent with the maximum parking island spacing requirement. Refer to the Development Standards – Parking Lot Landscaping memo for more detail.*

3. Comprehensive Plan GSAs, public input, Sustainability Audit, and PC and BOS Direction

*There is no specific GSA, sustainability audit recommendation, PC or BOS direction provided regarding this issue. Refer to the Development Standards – Parking Lot Landscaping memo for more detail.*

4. Solutions and Policy Options

- *Staff recommends reducing the 150' maximum parking bay requirement to 90' (consistent with staff's recommended parking lot tree placement policy) to avoid confusion between the two ordinance sections. Staff may also recommend referencing the proposed landscape ordinance requirement instead of explicitly restating it.*

**D. Parking lot location**

1. Description of Issue

- *The current ordinance does not restrict where a parking lot is built on a developing property. In Community Character Areas such as Norge which have building facades immediately adjacent to the street, a new development with parking in the front could be inconsistent with adjacent development and the guidelines for that area. Examples of locations in Community Character Areas have large parking areas in the front include Crosswalk Community Church (formerly the music building) and Fleet Brothers (formerly Basketville).*

2. History

*The current ordinance only restricts parking to be located on the same lot as the structure or use to which it serves. The Primary Principles for Five Forks Area policy and the design guidelines for the Toano Community Character Area are examples of existing policies that support this concept.*

3. Comprehensive Plan GSAs, public input, Sustainability Audit, and PC and BOS Direction

*T 4.1 – Guide new developments in designing roadway and parking areas that reduce that visual impact of auto-related infrastructure, specifically in Community Character Areas.*

- *Sustainability Audit Recommendation #90: The MU (Mixed Use) district should encourage parking to be located to the side or rear of the building. Large front yard parking lots should be discouraged in the LB and B1 districts.*
- *There was no specific PC or BOS direction provided regarding this topic.*

4. Solutions and Policy Options

- *Staff recommends incentivizing this concept through reduced parking lot landscaping requirements (as the parking lot would be screened by a building landscaping may not be necessary) or other means.*

### **III. Conclusion**

Staff has been reviewing the parking ordinance to ensure consistency with the American Planning Association Best Management Practices. Given this scope, staff has investigated ways to help alleviate congestion on adjacent roadways, increase consistency with the landscape ordinance, reduce parking lot visibility in Community Character Areas, and reduce excessive parking. The items mentioned above are recommended solutions to specific actions stated in the Comprehensive Plan and the Sustainability Audit. They reflect best management practices and efforts in other staff reports. Staff recommends the Policy Committee support these revisions which will help reduce the impacts of auto related infrastructure and impervious cover.